

Recd

50,000

5-10-65

L-639

NEW COLEUS for *Texas Gardens*



A. F. DEWERTH

Professor of Floriculture

Department of Soil and Crop Sciences

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Ancient civilizations cultivated plants mainly for medicinal or food flavoring purposes. The mint family includes many such plants still grown in modern gardens from which condiments such as rosemary, sage, lavender, thyme, horehound, lemon balm and majoram are derived.

When the medicinal and useful plants of the mint family found their way into the monastery gardens of Europe, a highly ornamental member of this same family, Coleus, also became popular because of its brilliant foliage colors. Since then, the Coleus has been grown in gardens everywhere.

Coleus blumei is a tender perennial native to Java and today there are many varieties characterized by their variegated and highly colorful leaves.

Cuttings of the Texas A&M University introductions are not available from this university, but should be purchased from commercial sources.

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

TEXAS AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION . . . TEXAS AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE

College Station, Texas



Texas A&M



Texas Gold



Red Croton



Twelfth Man



Vesuvius



Aggieland



Anna Pfitzer



Laing's Croton



Pineapple Beauty

Coleus plants produce spikes of small, pale blue to white flowers, but the flowering habit is insignificant compared with the outstanding foliage color.

The plants have a shrubby growth habit, sometimes reaching a height of 3 to 4 feet in one growing season. When allowed to grow naturally without any training, they tend to produce open, rather leggy shapes. Frequent pinching during the growing season will produce attractive, compact plants. Pinch out the flowers to prevent the plants using their vigor to promote flower and seed setting, which also contributes to leggy open growth habits. Regular pinching out of the tips of new growth will induce new shoots to develop and fill the open bare spots with new foliage.

Loose, well-drained soil, with ample moisture, is preferred for coleus. Monthly applications of a complete garden fertilizer high in nitrogen, such as a 2-1-1 ratio, give excellent results.

Coleus thrive and produce the most vivid foliage colors in sunny locations, except in the hot, dry areas of Texas. In such situations, wind-free, partly shaded places are best.

Aphids and mealy bugs occasionally threaten coleus plants. Two or three applications of malathion or lindane sprays, made at 10-day intervals, will control these pests. Follow directions on the manufacturer's label. Periodic inspections for signs of these insects and immediate control measures upon discovery will prevent serious infestations.

Most of the named varieties of Coleus described herein must be propagated vegetatively since they do not come true to type from seed. They are easy to propagate from simple stem cuttings. Even inexperienced gardeners can have a source of cuttings by carrying the plants indoors to overwinter in pots. Freshly rooted plants are best for planting in a garden each year.

HOW TO ROOT CUTTINGS

Cuttings are made from the tips of plants. They should be long enough to contain three sets of leaves below the tip. Remove the bottom pair of leaves and cut just below the node where these two leaves arose. Stick the cutting in to a depth so that the next set of leaves is just above the surface of the propagating medium.

Disease-free, light-weight Texas A&M propagating medium of 50 percent horticultural grade perlite and 50 percent sphagnum peat moss gives excellent results. Moisten the mixture thoroughly and fill the pot or flat to be used for rooting the cuttings to the top with this medium. Firm it down well. Then stick in the cuttings as described previously. Firm the mixture around them.

Place the pot or flat of cuttings inside a cellophane or polyethylene bag and seal it with a pin, staple or paper clip. About 7 days later, open the top of the bag, but leave the pot or flat inside the bag. After another 5 to 7 days, remove the bag and the cuttings

(Continued on page 4)

Jaynes Giant

TEXAS A&M INTRODUCTIONS

AGGIELAND

Broad, deeply scalloped lanceolate leaves; center brilliant rose pink blotched with creamy yellow surrounded by chocolate brown zone and bordered with narrow irregular green edge.

ANNA PFITZER

Lanceolate leaves with deeply scalloped very wavy margins. Bright yellowish green with prominent creamy yellow veins, basal spot and petioles.

AUTUMN

Shallow-scalloped leaves, deep purplish red to reddish brown lightly flecked with deep pink and greenish yellow spots.

BLACKBURN

Long, linear, deeply crinkled leaves, purplish red, edged and tipped with dark green and yellow.

CRIMSON VELVET

Deeply scalloped leaves with wavy and crinkled margins. Dark purplish red with lighter purplish red to pink areas throughout each leaf.

FRECKLES

Brilliant primrose yellow leaves with shallow-scalloped margins, overlaid with blotches and tones of reddish brown through yellowish green.

JAYNES GIANT

Extremely large wide leaves of brilliant lemon yellow splashed and mottled with large red to reddish brown spots and blotches.

LAING'S CROTON

Linear, scalloped and deeply crinkled leaves, with highly variable coloring from almost solid red, green or yellow to all combinations of shades, tints and tones of these colors.

LINCOLN

Moderate-sized leaves with shallow-scalloped margins. Lemon yellow ground flecked with red and reddish brown spots and blotches.

MRS. HODGES

Shallow-scalloped, linear curved and crinkled leaves with salmon pink central zone bordered with a wide band of pink to olive green; edged with a thin line of yellowish green.

PEGASUS

Large relatively broad leaves with shallow-scalloped margins. The major portion of the leaf area dark purplish red with green undertones. The edges of the leaves are colored in a similar manner and broad lateral areas of yellow flecked with green.

PINEAPPLE BEAUTY

Large leaves with shallow-scalloped margins. The basal portion of the leaf blade and petiole dark maroon and the remainder of the leaf bright yellowish green.

RED CROTON

Linear, scalloped and deeply crinkled leaves. The center zone pinkish red and the margins maroon.

SPOTTED BEAUTY

Compact plant with broad linear leaves deeply scalloped margins with a central zone of creamy white bordered by bright yellowish green. Light red irregular flecking on leaves and petioles.

TEXAS A&M

Deeply scalloped, broadly lanceolate leaves. Deep maroon to black with white spot at base of leaf blade and bright rose midribs and narrow bright green margin.

TEXAS GOLD

Broad lanceolate leaves with shallow-scalloped margins. Bright greenish yellow with occasional and irregular maroon spots and blotches.

TEXAS SPLASH

Lanceolate leaves with medium-scalloped margins. Leaves blotched, mottled and flecked with shades and tones of bright green, primrose yellow, maroon and brilliant rose.

TEXAS SUNSET

Lanceolate leaves with deeply scalloped margins. The central zone brilliant rose red surrounded by an irregular olive brown band and edged with a narrow yellowish green border.

TWELFTH MAN

Lanceolate leaves with shallow-scalloped margins. Deep maroon with a very narrow brilliant green border.

VESUVIUS

Medium to wide leaves with shallow-scalloped margins. Main portion of the leaves red overlaid with chocolate brown and marked with darker areas. The leaf borders edged in golden yellow to pale green.



Spotted Beauty



Blackburn



Autumn



Crimson Velvet



Texas Sunset



Mrs. Hodges



Lincoln



Texas Splash



Freckles



Pegasus

will be rooted and ready for potting. Follow this procedure for rooting cuttings from pots grown indoors over the winter months for transplanting to the garden.

Coleus cuttings also root readily in water. Place them in a jar or glass of water so that only the lower end of the cutting is immersed. Roots will form in 10 days to 2 weeks.

COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION

For fast, high-quality production, commercial producers should follow these steps:

- Use the Texas A&M Standard Lightweight Growing Medium, prepared as follows for 1 cubic yard of mixture:

- 13.5 cu. ft. horticultural grade perlite
- 13.5 cu. ft. sphagnum peat moss
- 5.0 lb. superphosphate (20 %)
- 10.0 lb. dolomite
- 5.0 lb. complete fertilizer (8-12-4 analysis)
- 3.0 oz. chelated iron

- Mix these ingredients together thoroughly.
- Pot three rooted cuttings per 6-inch azalea pot in this medium.

- Immediately after potting, water the cuttings with a standard starter solution of 20-20-20, 10-52-17 or 14-28-14 at the rate of 12 ounces per 100 gallons of water, plus 16 ounces of Aqua-Gro, a nonionic wetting agent, to insure uniform moistening of the medium.

- Fertilize with every watering thereafter, using a completely soluble fertilizer with 20-20-20 analysis at the rate of 12 ounces per 100 gallons of water until 3 weeks before the plants are to be sold.

- Pinch the tips of the cuttings using a tip-inch 7 days after potting. Then pinch every 2 weeks for the next 6 weeks.

- At the end of 9 weeks, a salable, specimen, high-quality plant should result.

GROWING COLEUS FROM SEED

Other types of coleus can be grown from seed. Sow the seed thinly over the surface of the same mixture used for rooting cuttings. Do not cover them. Place the flat or pot in a polyethylene or cellophane bag and seal it as recommended for rooting cuttings. When the seed germinate, remove the containers from the bag and keep the surface of the medium moist until the seedlings are large enough for transporting.

Many years ago, innumerable named varieties of Coleus were cultivated and widely available to gardeners, but eventually these varieties diminished until very few named sorts were available and only mixtures of the various types could be produced from seed. In 1962, the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, in cooperation with the New Crops Research Branch, U. S. Department of Agriculture, began a study to determine and develop a number of named varieties from plant introductions and by hybridization and selection that would be well adapted for commercial production as a greenhouse pot plant crop and for general garden use.

This program made possible the introduction of 20 named varieties of *Coleus blumei*, both suitable for rapid, high-quality pot plant crop production for year-round sales and especially well adapted to the prevailing environment in Texas homes and gardens.

Coleus varieties usually are planted outdoors in the spring as annuals. In the milder climates of Texas, these plants can continue to grow outdoors throughout the year. In other areas, they can be grown indoors for indoor landscapes or in containers for the home. They grow equally well in containers or in the open ground.

Foliage forms, sizes and configurations vary widely among the varieties. They range from oval shapes as wide as 4 inches or more to the elongated, lanceolate, twisted and curled shapes of all sizes and dimensions. The leaf margins may be crenate, scalloped-toothed, fringed or serrate.

Foliage colors in Coleus have a wider range than those of any other variegated-leaved garden plant. The colors include shades and tints of buff, cream, green, maroon, peach, pink, orange, red, rose, salmon and yellow. All Texas A&M introductions have an outstanding characteristic of holding the vivid colorings of foliage throughout the year.